

Editor's Introduction



Brian Mockenhaupt

Imagine coming home after World War II, when one in ten Americans had been in uniform. If you met a young man, the question wouldn't have been *whether* he served, but *where*. And those who hadn't served likely knew many friends and family who had, worrying for them while they were gone and trying to understand how the war had changed them.

I think I would have found some comfort in that. At least more of the unspoken would have been understood. But today, a far smaller minority of men and women serves in the military, fewer than one in 100, and the impact of America's military actions overseas is barely felt at home. Upon leaving the military we can feel scattered—thrown to the wind—as we search for our place in a world that sometimes seems to have gone on without us.

Here we have a community built around an act of reflection—upon our time in the military and what we carry forward from those experiences. This volume of *The Journal of Military Experience* shows the continuing evolution of Military Experience & the Arts, and the dedication of its founder, Travis L. Martin, to providing veterans and others in their support networks with both a community of shared experience and a platform for creative expression. The first two volumes of the *JME* included fiction, poetry, artwork, scholarship. and

non-fiction writing. The success of those volumes and growing interest by contributors necessitated an expansion: Poetry and fiction now have their own publications, *Blue Streak: A Journal of Military Poetry*, and *The Blue Falcon Review*, a collection of fiction.

The Journal of Military Experience continues to showcase the artwork, scholarship, and non-fiction writing of a broad group of veterans and a small number of civilians involved in the military community. The works in this volume span nearly 70 years of military service, from the battle of El Alamein in Egypt to the now 12-year-old war in Afghanistan.

Tara Leigh Tappert, who oversees the journal's arts section, describes artwork as “one of the most powerful ways to provide bridges across the military and civilian divide.” Here she curates a wide-ranging and impressive collection from more than two dozen artists working in everything from sculpture and photography to performance art and paper making.

Eric Hodges has taken over the important work of building the *JME*'s scholarship section, and I am continuing to oversee the nonfiction pieces in the journal. A heartfelt *thank you* is owed to the editors and mentors who have volunteered their time to help veterans tell their stories in such diverse mediums. By the time pieces reach me, they have often been through several revisions, with weeks of back and forth discussions between the contributors and the volunteer editors, which leaves me with little to do but immerse myself in the stories as a reader.

I am deeply grateful that these writers and artists have entrusted their work with us. Whether veteran or spouse, therapist or friend, they have filled these pages with thoughtfulness and evocative imagery, and it has been a privilege to work with them as they labor to tell this rich and complex story of military experience.